

Australian Garden HISTORY

vol. 33, no. 1, July 2021



Walking the Bundian Way

*Tracing the origins of a
Californian redwood*

*Preserving Yarrabin and
Fairview*

Editorial

Francesca Beddie

The physical distancing required by COVID-19 gave tree-hugging a big boost. A Facebook page showed people all around the world getting tactile with trees. None of the pictures I saw had the same emotive appeal as the photograph on this issue's front cover. Taken by Gillian Jenkinson, it shows her grandchildren embracing South Australia's champion tree, a Californian redwood. Jeff Jenkinson relates its story. His article highlights how valuable record keeping is to garden history. This is a point also stressed by Ian Carroll, head gardener at Oldbury Farm, during an interview with Lyn Barrett (AGHS Southern Highlands) and separately to me. You will find an extract from that oral history on the back cover. I met Ian while doing an interview with James Boxhall, one of the few professional hedgelayers in Australia.

Thank you to those who have donated to the new Nina Crone Writing Fund. It is exciting to know we can continue to encourage emerging writers. The last tranche from the original

award supported proud Yuin man, Warren Foster, to write about the Bundian Way, a walking track from Mt Kosciuszko to Eden on the far south coast of New South Wales. Surveying the Bundian Way has been, as Mick Gooda said when he was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, a mechanism for

reconciliation. Warren's article introduces the Indigenous gardens that have existed along the track for millennia and explains how these are still identifiable—how the land itself can be read.

Collectors and painters of plants, house owners and art lovers all feature in this issue, each tale adding to the historical record of plants and the people who have nurtured them. One of the many remarkable aspects of the Field Collection of cacti, now growing in the Arid Garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, is how many have known provenance. And, as Andrea Whitely shows, the current owner of a Queen Anne villa in Perth, Thomas Murrell, is not only preserving its rose garden but also commissioning art inspired by the property. Colleen Morris and Beverly Allen introduce the botanical art celebrating Joseph Banks and Sydney Parkinson, soon to be displayed in an exhibition presented by the NSW Florilegium Society at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney.

The next in our occasional series on Remarkable Gardens is of special relevance to this journal. Dennis McManus reports the good news that *Yarrabin*, once the property of Tim and Keva North, who were so instrumental in bringing the Society its first official publication, has been saved from a potential development in Bowral in the NSW Southern Highlands.

With international borders still not open, this issue's bookshelf contains two books published overseas, to give you a vicarious journey abroad. The first is set in Edwardian England and China; the second, is a history of the peregrinations of that most precious of spices, saffron.

Readers of the digital version of this issue of *Australian Garden History* will notice we have introduced hyperlinks. I hope this will help you navigate the wealth of information available in the digital world. That brings me to encourage all who are not able to attend the Sydney conference in person to consider signing up to the virtual sessions.

The first issue of AGHS's official journal, June 1984, image Dennis McManus



Cover photo It's time to do some tree hugging: Jeff Jenkinson's grandchildren do just that, image Gillian Jenkinson

Australian Garden HISTORY

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contents

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The Australian Garden History Society acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia. We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past, present and emerging.

The Bundian Way

A shared Aboriginal and European history WARREN FOSTER 4

South Australia's champion tree

A Sequoia sempervirens in the Adelaide Hills JEFF JENKINSON 9

100 years in the making

From a young boy's hobby to an exceptional addition to the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria
TIM ENTWISLE 12

Heritage, roses and art in leafy Subiaco

The story of the rose garden at *Fairview* ANDREA WHITELY 16

Putting hawthorn hedges to work

Introducing a modern hedgelayar FRANCESCA BEDDIE 20

The Botanic Endeavour

The Florilegium Society celebrates the Banks and Solander collection
COLLEEN MORRIS AND BEVERLY ALLEN 24

For the bookshelf

27

Remarkable Gardens

Yarrabin 29

Profile

John Viska 32

Obituary

Warwick Mayne-Wilson 33

Inside view

34

AGHS contacts

35

AGHS National Oral History Collection

Ian Carroll 36



On page 28, Trevor Nottle reviews a new book about the Edwardian plant hunter, Will Purdom, pictured here with Chinese colleagues, image courtesy of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh



Warren Foster
NINA CRONE FUND RECIPIENT

The Bundian Way

A shared Aboriginal and European history

Warren Foster walks the Bundian Way from Dead Horse Gap towards the Cascades, and ultimately the coast, with the treeless High Country in the background.
Image John Blay

The Bundian Way is an ancient pathway from the sea to the mountains. The route spans a remarkable variety of bush landscapes, across plains and mountain ranges, between Turemulerrer (Twofold Bay) and Targangal (Mount Kosciuszko), the highest point on the Australian mainland. In 2010 the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council was funded through the national Indigenous Heritage Program to survey the Bundian Way on foot, to identify the route and its Aboriginal landscapes. Over many trips, John Blay, naturalist, poet and the Bundian Way's project officer, led survey groups, each of about six Aboriginal people, along the entire route to examine its many facets, including its flora and fauna. A NSW Heritage listing followed in December 2012.

In 2009 and 2010 I was fortunate enough to walk the Bundian Way with other Kooris and John Blay, who is an old friend. It was a route my family knew already. It featured places my mother had told me about. My grandfather and grandmother walked it; my grandfather many times. He often called it the kangaroo track when he told stories in Bega from his favourite seat in the main street near the old post office.

A shared history

The Bundian Way is part of a network of Aboriginal pathways in Yuin, Ngarigo, Jaitmathang and Bidawal country. These paths acted as trade routes across the continent, as well as connecting people to their ceremonies and sacred places.

Coastal people went into the mountains for the bogong ceremonies, while the inland people came to the coast for whale celebrations.

The Yuin people of the far south New South Wales had a special relationship with whales and dolphins. Together with the killer whales or orca (beeyah), they hunted the baleen whales (mureeira) that were travelling with their calves near the coastline in spring. Such voluntary cooperative hunting between man and whale was to become the foundation of the whaling methods used by European Australians at Eden's Twofold Bay.

With the arrival of white Australians, another layer of history was added along the Bundian Way. Journal entries show that the first Europeans, often surveyors or graziers, were guided around the region by the old Aboriginal people, many of whom can still be named. For example, soon after Oswald Brierly arrived in Twofold Bay with Ben Boyd in 1842, Brierly struck up a strong friendship with an Aboriginal man, Budginbro, who would lead him along the pathway to the Monaro. Brierly wrote:

Upon leaving the Bay we struck at once into the forest keeping a general north-westerly direction and began to ascend the mountain ranges that overlook the Bay. The country for miles had been swept by bush fires, and for some hours after starting we rode through a most dreary looking forest of blackened gum trees...

Brierly, who had studied art and naval architecture in London, also sketched the first European record of the landscapes and Aboriginal cultures along the way. The landscapes that greeted these European settlers were the result of thousands of years of care for country. What the white men observed to be the 'parklike' land around the bay at Eden was due to Aboriginal management and their use of fire. And along the Way, areas beside the paths had been cleared by regular burning, which also helped Aboriginal walkers keep alight the firesticks they carried with them. The scientists who followed the settlers, men like botanist Charles von Hügel, anthropologist Alfred Howitt and geologist W B Clarke, added their accounts to the record, giving a unique picture of what has remained and what has changed since first European sorties into the area.

Flowers from an Indigenous perspective

Flowers are special to the First Nations people in so many ways. Their seasonal behaviour tells us what we need to look for to find food and when to catch different fish. During the survey

trips with John, we saw and documented a lot of native plants and flowers that First Nations People utilised. In some places we found gardens where the flowers would appear at different times, meaning yams were available both when people were walking to the mountains and months later when they returned. Other food plants along the way included blackwood, lomandra, onion and lady's tresses orchids, and bulbine or onion lilies. At the Darrewarra campsite one summery afternoon we were showered by what looked like snowflakes. It was the manna from the ribbon gums, which could be gathered into balls and then eaten. These were especially sweet, and delicious after eating yams from a nearby field.

Edible yams have formed part of the Indigenous people's diet for millenia. Unfortunately, today the yam fields are being heavily impacted by the brumby population and the recent big and far too hot fires. Our burning is cooler and more frequent. The ash of the burnt grasses fertilised the next crop and careful digging in the yam fields helped



Top Manna from the ribbon gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*), Byadbo Wilderness

Bottom Greenhood orchid

images John Blay





A Bondi Springs yamfields and a scar tree, from which bark was removed to create shields, tool, containers or other artefacts. These trees are valuable for the evidence they present of earlier land uses. They are not unusual along the route but a great many are dead and in danger of being lost to bushfire.

B *Diuris semilunulata* orchid

C Starchy yam from *Diuris* (donkey orchid)

D Vanilla lily yams with yamstick

E Yam daisy (*Microseris*) with hover fly. Yam daisies were known as murrnong in the western districts. Murrnong has become the common name. The Monaro name was Nyamin.

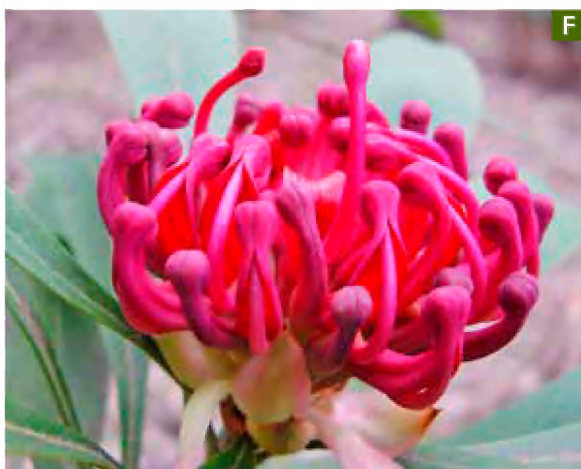
F *Telopea oreades* (tree waratah or Gippsland waratah). The name 'waratah' comes from the Eora word 'warada' meaning 'beautiful' or 'seen from afar'.

images John Blay



loosen the soils to bring on propagation of the yam plants. The women cared for these fields, coming together to control the fires and dig up the murrnong roots: crafting a yam stick was an important milestone in a woman's life.

We also used the native flowers as a calendar. Wattles can tell us when to fish for what species. For example, when the black wattle is flowering the blackfish are running. Other flowering trees tell when other fish are around and when the lobsters are ready to catch. Another tells us when the oysters are fat and ready.



Some flowers are edible, like the water lilies. We would eat the flower, the stem, the bulbous roots. Every part of plant can be used and eaten. We also made a sweet drink like cordial from banksia and grevillea nectar, while other flowers had medicinal uses. Some were brewed into a tea to drink and if the medicine was too bitter, we sweetened it up with the nectar of the banksia and grevillea plants.

Another flower that is really important and played a significant role in the First Nations People's Creation stories, especially for the Yuin People, is the waratah. This magnificent bloom is prominent in the Creation Story of Gulaga Mountain and connects back to the stars and the moon.



Top A map of the Bundian Way's 335km touring route, courtesy John Blay

Right Survey personnel in camp near the Lower Snowy River: Warren Foster second to the left, John Blay, far right, image John Blay [camera was on delay]

Another Dreamtime story explains the waratah was made red from a white flower by the blood of the red-bellied black snake. These stories were handed down by word of mouth for generations upon generations for thousands of years. The reason we tell these stories is to know where we're coming from, to give us an identity. And if we know where we're coming from, we know where we're going. As long as we keep telling these stories we know that our culture is alive and running strong through our veins.

Walking the Bundian Way

All these beautiful native Australian plants and flowers still play an important part in the First Nations people's everyday lives. They are especially evident as you walk along the Bundian Way. Native cherry and kurrajong trees act as markers of the route.

No one day of the journey is exactly like the last one. The landscapes you pass through are constantly changing, from the High Country, through the tall alpine ash forests, then mountain gum forests on the way down to the lower Snowy River. Here, the plants change because, although it is warmer, the country falls into the rain shadow from the highest peaks. Byadbo is extremely dry before conditions ease as you come onto the treeless plains and the Monaro. The tablelands fall away quickly to the tall forests and coastal plains. Flowers reveal the yamfields, usually at the best places to rest the night. Yet, many Australians wouldn't recognise an Aboriginal garden, even when they walk over it.



Reference

[Report on a Survey of The Bundian Way 2010–2011](#) by John Blay and Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council

Warren Foster is a proud Yuin man from the Djiringanj tribe of Wallaga Lake in far south NSW. He has worked as a culture teacher and tour guide and is founder of the Gulaga Dancers, a traditional men's dance group.

The Nina Crone Writing Fund supports emerging garden writers and those wishing to offer a fresh perspective on issues related to the history of gardens, landscapes and the challenges of environment and heritage. To donate to the fund, go to <https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/donate/> or contact the editor at editor@gardenhistorysociety.org.au



South Australia's Champion Tree

A *Sequoia sempervirens*
in the Adelaide Hills

Jeff Jenkinson

Sometimes we get surprises in life, obtaining new information that in turn causes reflection and self-education. Such was the case for me during a visit a few years ago to *St Vigeans*, our property in Stirling, South Australia, by Australian members of the International Dendrology Society.

images Gillian Jenkinson

The Rainforest Gully
with mist, 1970.
Image J. Wright,
copyright ENBA.



St Vigeans is a State Heritage-listed historic house and garden in the Adelaide Hills. The original owner was Professor Edward Charles Stirling (1848–1919) – surgeon, scientist and politician – who built the two-storey house from local Mt Lofty sandstone during 1882–83. He helped plan and started planting the 2.6 hectares (6.5 acres) with his head gardener, Douglas Searle, while the house was being constructed. The chosen site was on a hillside sloping southwards to a winter creek. An area was excavated to produce a flat platform for the house, which was approached by a sweeping driveway from the entrance of the property. The garden beds were placed behind a series of local dry stone walls, which follow the contours of the hillside, with connecting paths zig zagging down the hill to the creek where three shade houses were built to help acclimatise imported or tender plants. There was an elaborate watering system and a team of three gardeners.

Stirling sought out many rare and exotic species to plant in his hill station garden. He filled it with various conifers, camellias, maples, beeches, oaks, palms and his special collections of rhododendrons and kalmias imported from John Waterer's nursery in England. The Mt Lofty area has the highest rainfall in South Australia and is 5°C cooler than the Adelaide plains with fogs and mists in winter, providing ideal conditions for cool-climate planting.

The surprise

Our visitors were walking around the garden obviously enjoying looking at the large variety of mature trees, with me, their host, asking their help in identifying some of them. We passed one of my favourites – which we could all identify as a very healthy large *Sequoia sempervirens* (pictured left) – planted adjacent to the winter creek at the bottom of the garden.

Several men in the party disappeared behind the tree as the rest of us walked on (perhaps too much liquid at lunch)? The men joined us again with a smile on their faces.

‘Did you know that you now have South Australia’s tallest tree?’ they asked, having checked the sequoia’s height and found it to be 51.5 m, with a girth of 6.25 m.

We took photographs of ourselves and the tree, as it is desirable to have a normal-height adult standing next to the trunk to give an idea of scale. The details were subsequently submitted to the [National Register of Big Trees](#), a register I had not known existed until then. It was set up by Derek McIntosh in 2008 to record the heights, circumference and crown of specimens, and has a points allocation for both indigenous and alien trees. The particular location coordinates are also recorded. Our redwood was named Champion Tree of South Australia from the date of registration and will hold the title until a taller tree is discovered or something happens to it.

Californian redwoods

Has this event altered my appreciation of the tree? It did stimulate me to learn more about the coastal or Californian redwood as it is commonly called. It is a member of the cypress family, genus *Sequoia*, capable of living between 1,200 and 2,200 years and reaching up to 115.5 m in height.

When was the redwood planted in the garden and what were the circumstances of its acquisition? Unfortunately, no *St Vigeans* garden inventory or diary has been discovered – if it ever existed. Sometimes we find slips of galvanised tin plate with beautifully written plant names in the garden but these do not have the date of planting.

In 19th-century South Australia, the main interest in the Californian redwood was its potential for timber production. Dr Schomburgk (1811–1891), Curator of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, gave a lecture on ‘Forest-tree Planting and its Influence on Climate’ at the Chamber of Manufactures on 6 June 1878. His observations of the Gardens’ European and Californian conifers collection led him to make recommendations that the Californian redwood be considered for forestry in South Australia.¹ In 1887 Mr J E Brown (1848–1899), Conservator of Forests, also recommended the exotics *Sequoia gigantea* and *Sequoia sempervirens* be grown in the Adelaide Hills.²

Professor Stirling was not trying to grow a forest but rather a collection of interesting trees in his garden. It is very likely he obtained his redwood seedling as a present from his great friend

John Bagot (1849–1910), businessman, pastoralist, politician and gardener, whom Stirling persuaded to build his summer home *Forest Lodge* nearby, in 1890. Bagot travelled extensively to Japan, England, America and within Australia following completion of *Forest Lodge*, importing plants and seeds for his new garden. Bagot had a particular interest in conifers and developed an extensive, four-hectare private pinetum. He did keep a record of his acquisitions. His accessions book (now in a private collection) shows he obtained a *Sequoia sempervirens* from Henry Sewell of Payneham Nursery in Adelaide in 1889 with four others coming from George Smith’s nursery in Ballarat, Victoria between 1890 and 1891. Seeds arrived from Vancouver in 1891 or 1892. Later an avenue of *Sequoia sempervirens* was planted as part of the grand design of the *Forest Lodge* garden by John Bagot’s architect son, Walter Hervey Bagot (1880–1963). John Bagot and Stirling regularly exchanged plants – especially conifers and rhododendrons.

Alfred Ernest Fairhall (1868–1943) had been head gardener at *St Vigeans* for 24 years (from 1897) when he was interviewed by the *Register* in 1926. He took the reporter around the garden, showing some of its features, explaining the *Liriodendron tulipifera* was now 60-foot (18m) high and that the fine *Sequoia sempervirens* had grown 74 feet (22m) in those 24 years.

The *St Vigeans* gardens were not spacious enough for avenues of trees, often having just a couple of specimens of each variety. There is only one Californian redwood; however, its more favourable location has accelerated its growth rate compared with those at *Forest Lodge*.

So, the information I have gathered suggests the champion tree may only be about 130 years old. While healthy now, as are those at *Forest Lodge*, climate change is unlikely to be kind to this champion tree but I am quite confident that it will happily outlast its current custodians, with future owners and their grandchildren still able to enjoy these magnificent trees.

Opposite

The bunya bunya is another favourite tree in the *St Vigeans* garden, but it is unlikely to outgrow the redwood

Note

All these redwoods are in private gardens with State Heritage protection with the owners determining any public access.

Dr Jeff Jenkinson is President of the South Australian branch of AGHS.



1 *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 27 July 1878, p.20

2 *SA Weekly Chronicle*, 17 December 1887



Tim Entwisle

100 years in the making

From a young boy's hobby to an exceptional addition to the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

Flowering cacti in
the new
Arid Garden

In November 2020, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria opened a new Arid Garden featuring more than 3,000 cacti and succulents. These plants have a remarkable story behind them, beginning with a young boy's hobby over 100 years ago, then an expedition in South America, a collection in regional Victoria and the passing down from father to son of a passion for these resilient and distinctive plants.

It was 1908, and 12-year-old Ralph Field already had an obsession. He had found an article in *The Boy's Own Annual* that taught him how to

graft his own cacti; he was soon hooked. Spurred by this success, Ralph's father brought him to Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria (then the Melbourne Botanic Gardens) for a pre-arranged meeting with the cacti curator. They returned home with a wagonload of cuttings of cacti and other succulents.

Thus began one of the most impressive cacti collections in the world. After serving in the First World War, Ralph moved to Tennyson in regional Victoria to farm the land, taking his cacti and succulents with him. While farming wheat and sheep he grew his collection through propagation, international plant swapping and an investment in a South American plant collecting expedition – the Blossfeld Expedition.

All images are
courtesy Royal
Botanic Gardens
Victoria



From 1936 to 1938, Harry Blossfeld a German-born botanist specialising in cacti led this remarkable international expedition through Bolivia, Peru and Argentina. Ralph Field invested in the expedition, buying one of 12 shares. The two-year journey covered 6,000 km, with regular shipments of cacti arriving at the Melbourne docks for Ralph.

From father to son

After Ralph died in 1987, his son Robert took on managing the cacti collection. Robert says:

Ralph really valued plants, particularly the native species already on his farm. He loved them so much he wouldn't remove a branch to make a fence; instead he would make the fence around the branch!

Cacti happily ruled Robert's life for 60 years in Tennyson — gardening, collecting and distributing seed around the world. Robert and his wife Donnette also welcomed a steady stream of visitors to their impressive garden — Whiora Cactus Farm — featuring more than 2,000 cactus plants. Over those decades, Robert also kept in close contact with the curators at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria.

On Robert's retirement from farming, it became time for his cacti to find a new home. It seemed a natural step to invite Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria to take stewardship of his collection. He was delighted when the Gardens readily accepted. For Robert, handing over of his lifetime's work was not only an emotional task, but also a complex and delicate exercise in logistics. In 2020, the Field Collection was relocated to the new Arid Garden at Melbourne Gardens, in garden beds especially designed to showcase their extraordinary shape and form. Melbourne Gardens is proud to manage this magnificent collection — the beginnings of which departed more than a century before on the back of a horse-drawn wagon with a delighted 12-year-old boy.

When asked about his favourite plant, Robert said:

I like seeing all the plants together — it's like children — you might have three children but they're not all identical and you love them all.

The Arid Garden

The new Arid Garden forms part of the Arid and Drylands Precinct in the area around Gate C and Gate D of Melbourne Gardens. Currently, this area includes Guilfoyle's Volcano, the California

Top left Robert Field in Tennyson

Top right Blossfeld expedition to South America

Bottom New Arid Garden, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

Guilfoyle's Volcano was originally built in 1876 by the second director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, William Guilfoyle, as a decorative folly. It was redesigned and repurposed by Andrew Laidlaw as a water reservoir for the gardens in 2010.



Collection, Eucalypt Lawn, Tecoma Pavilion and the Arid Garden site. The centerpiece of the new precinct is the redesigned Arid Garden, with its strong focus on form and colour.

Chris Cole, Executive Director, Melbourne Gardens, says that the new Arid Garden is part of a 20-year plan for Melbourne Gardens, taking into consideration Melbourne's future climate:

As a result of climate change, botanic gardens need to be considering plants that will endure increasingly hotter and drier conditions. Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria is looking towards 2070 and thinking about which plants will be able to survive. As part of this, the Gardens has a Climate Risk Assessment Framework and criteria, against which each plant is reviewed.

Thanks to generous donor support, the redevelopment of the Arid Garden demonstrates an evocative planting theme for the Arid and Drylands Precinct. This responds to the [2020–2040 Melbourne Gardens Masterplan](#), the Gardens' [Landscape Succession Strategy](#) and expands on the success of the Guilfoyle's Volcano development, demonstrating the organisation's leadership in designing landscapes that respond to a changing climate.

The Garden was funded by Joan Darling, a long-term and generous supporter of the Gardens, with donations of plants coming from succulent and cacti collectors, including the retail nursery Collectors Corner, the entire collection of the late Robert Stevenson, former President of the Cactus and Succulent Society of Australia, and the Field Collection. The Cactus and Succulent Society of

Australia also provided funding to support the acquisition and transport of plant material.

Another project recently completed as part of the previous Melbourne Gardens Masterplan was the Fern Gully Restoration Project, which includes a Sensory Garden that was opened in 2020.

The Garden's design

The new Arid Garden was designed by Andrew Laidlaw, one of Australia's leading landscape architects and designers, and the Gardens' landscape architect for 23 years. As part of this role, he has designed and developed the Long Island Indigenous Garden, the Perennial Border, the Rose Species Garden, the Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden and Guilfoyle's Volcano.

His design is based on an aloe-cell structure. The arrangement of the plants produces stunning textures and vistas, along with plenty of colour. Andrew says:

The opportunity to design a project with plant material as remarkable as the cacti from the Field and Stevenson collections, with their array of different forms, colours and textures, is a dream come true.

It is a contemporary interpretation of parterre garden, with many spaces to sit and gather or to contemplate the landscape. Smaller cacti/succulent beds are positioned next to the seats and the cell design is repeated on concrete around the seats. Statement barrel cacti stand in the centre, pole cacti around the edge,

which together with pink/red-coloured pathways and a rocky mounded outer edge emulate desert landscapes.

The collection adds a significant contribution to our already existing cacti and succulent collection within the gardens. Like the Stevenson collection, some of the Fields' cacti are very old and some are rare plants often, thankfully, with a known provenance. The Field Collection also has a significant story behind it, which makes it particularly interesting for a public garden.

Moving the plants

The biggest challenge was handling and moving the often prickly plant material. The 2,000 plants in the Field Collection had to be moved from Tennyson to Melbourne. This was done meticulously by Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria horticultural staff. Once in Melbourne they had to be potted and cared for by the Gardens' nursery staff until they were ready to be placed in the new Arid Garden. The whole process has taken more than five years and relied on Mrs Darling's support as well as the plant donations. As Andrew Laidlaw points out, designing a garden to display a collection of plants is often limited by the number of plants you have or by being able to access enough rare and wild material. In the case of the Arid Garden, neither of these factors was an issue.

Brett Pritchard, horticulturist, was involved in transporting the plants from Robert Field's farm to the nursery at the Gardens, and then from the nursery to the new Garden. He recalls:

It took seven months and 19 truckloads to bring the collection to the Melbourne Gardens, obviously with great difficulty and care. Some of the plants are 80-plus years old and weigh up to 300 kilograms, so they were heavy, and spiky!

We invented a little wooden 'stretcher' that allowed two people to lift the plants and put the pot in position without actually manhandling it, while maintaining 1.5 m for social distancing during COVID-19. For the very tall pole cacti we put a pipe right over the plant then carried them in the pole. We also used carpet offcuts, with a person either side holding it, which didn't damage the spines because they went straight through the material.

Another technique was to use biodegradable hessian for the barrel cacti. We dragged them into position with the hessian left underneath. That way it could slowly decompose and be gone, which saved us touching the plant by taking away any need to lift it once it was *in situ*.

The New Arid Garden at Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne has been generations in the making. It has been crafted with passion and care, and, as a garden well suited to Melbourne's future climate, will no doubt be enjoyed for many generations to come.



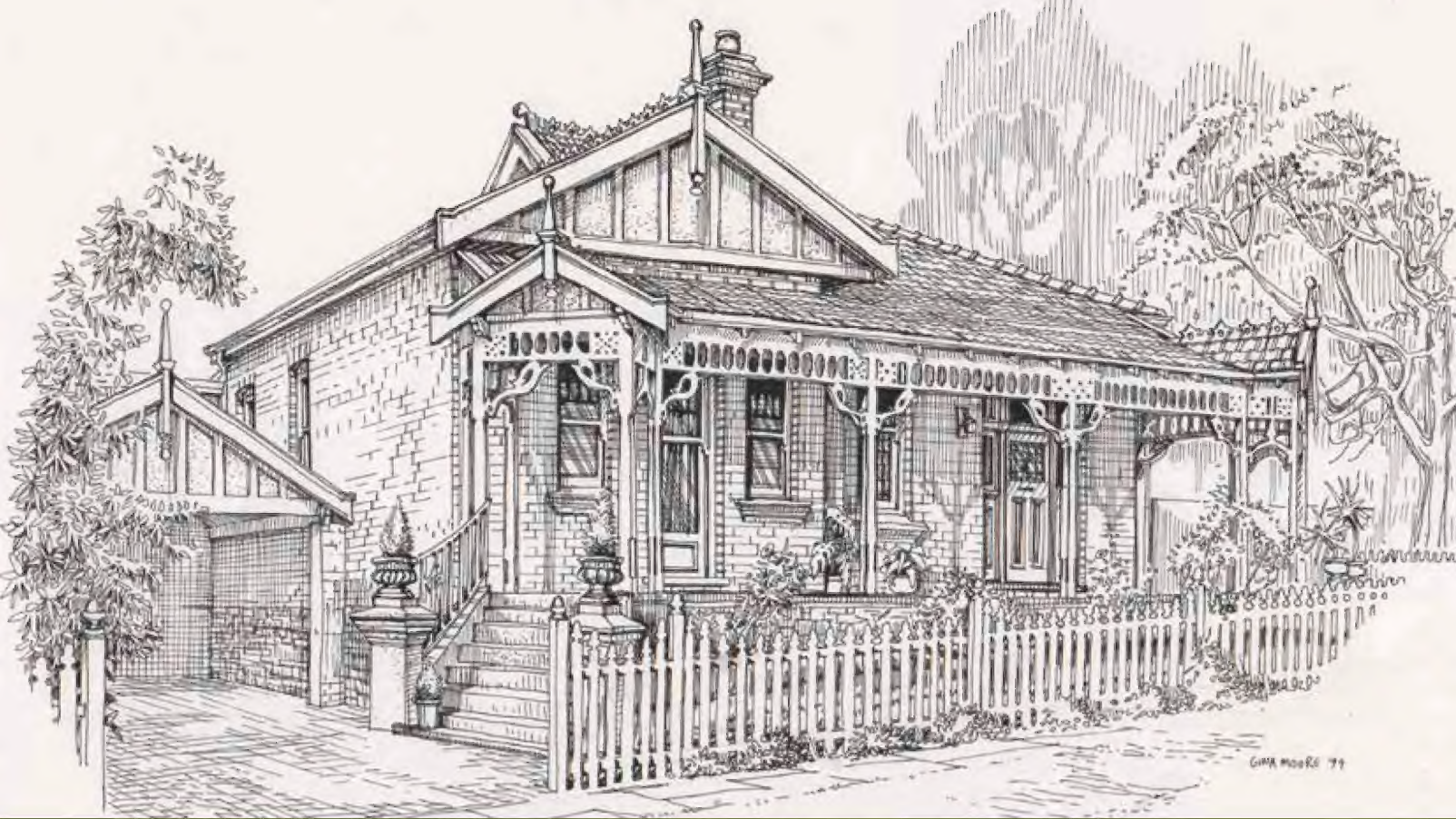
Top Andrew Laidlaw at the Arid Garden while under construction

Middle Brett Pritchard, horticulturist

Bottom Robert Field in the new Arid Garden

Professor Tim Entwisle is the Director and Chief Executive of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, and patron of the Australian Garden History Society.





Andrea Whitely

Heritage, roses and art in leafy Subiaco

Fairview is a rare and well-preserved example of a late gold-boom-period home located in the Chesters estate heritage precinct in Subiaco, Perth. Image Gina Moore, *Fairview*, 1994, pen and ink on paper, 20 x 28 cm, from The Fairview Private Art Collection

It is said a house sometimes selects its owners rather than the other way around. That is certainly true of *Fairview* and the rose garden that envelopes her. There have only been four owners of this picturesque Queen Anne villa built in 1915, whose front entrance garden has been nominated for listing on the Local Heritage Scheme (LHS) for the City of Subiaco because of its strong links to the home's first three owners. This is the first time a rose garden has been nominated in the City of Subiaco, a suburb with a very high concentration of heritage homes. The scheme aims to identify and record places that are of cultural heritage significance.

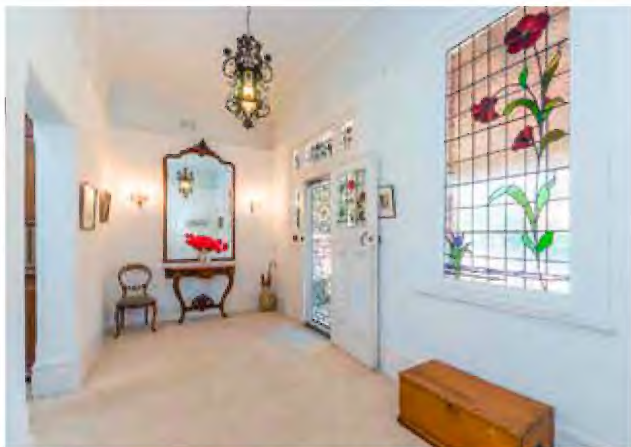
Heritage

Set in the leafy inner Perth suburb of Subiaco just a stone's throw from Kings Park and the City of Perth, *Fairview* is perched on the high side

of a cool tree-lined street. When being built, the elevated position was considered much healthier than a low-lying site. Here, one will often find Thomas Murrell, the home's current owner, tending his garden or entertaining friends, proudly speaking about the gardens, his art collection, the home or all three.

Heritage is about prosperity, curiosity and opportunity. For example, the first owner, John Kennedy, a Scottish immigrant, built *Fairview* at the peak of his career to tell the world he had achieved middle-class respectability. Kennedy was an engineer at the Perth Ice Works in the pre-refrigeration age. As a nod to his profession, he included snowflakes on the square corner timber brackets of the front veranda. He had real design flair.

Kennedy was obsessed with quality craftsmanship and wanted to create a stylistic whole that represented his importance and influence in society. The elegantly symmetrical verandah that frames the rose garden was placed perfectly in the landscape. The entrance hall was designed as a welcoming and impressive reception area. It is adorned with leadlight stained-glass windows of red roses and violet bearded iris designed by Arthur Clarke of



Barnett Brothers Glass Merchants in East Perth. The suburb of Subiaco has one of the most well-preserved collections of leadlight stained-glass windows in the world. Clarke was renowned for incorporating both flora and fauna motifs as well as his use of strong vertical and horizontal lines which, more than 110 years later, are still outstanding features at *Fairview*.

According to Murrell, *Fairview* is a fitting manifesto for someone who made good in late 19th-century Australia. Kennedy started out as an uneducated and inexperienced apprentice engineer who left the shores of Scotland with nothing but the clothes he wore and a small suitcase. Inspired by art, nature and classical Greek and Roman architecture, he built ice works all over Australia, becoming a prosperous and well-educated man of taste.

The second owner, John Pointon, who bought the house and all its contents in 1925, is linked to the success of Perth's iconic Boans department store, which was purchased by Myer Grace Bros in 1984. In the late 1890s, farm labourer John William Levi Pointon abandoned his wife and baby in South Australia to seek his fortune on the Western Australian goldfields, but being short of cash took a temporary job as a packer at Boans. He found the job so rewarding he spent the next 40 years with the retailer, climbing the corporate ladder and being appointed managing director in October 1941. By the time the now-prosperous Pointon bought *Fairview*, Boans had introduced their garden conservatory and plant listing, which included rose varieties recommended as suitable for West Australian growing conditions. There is a strong connection between Boans, their mail-order garden catalogues, the development of Perth's garden suburbs, including Subiaco, in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s and the establishment of the Rose Society in Western Australia in 1932.

Roses

The foundation of the current garden at *Fairview* came later, with the modern rose bushes planted by the home's third owner, heritage activist Polly Willis,



who bought the property in 1970. Not long after she began living in Subiaco, there was a push for residential progress—the supersession of old houses in the area by more modern flats. This threat of widespread demolition was confronted by the joint efforts of Willis and the Subiaco Historical Society. They planned functions and engaged in historical research that fostered greater counteraction and involvement by the community as a whole.

Willis owned *Fairview* for 40 years. She would often be seen wheelbarrowing sand from one part of the property to the other, designing the garden beds and creating the bones of the gardens that still stand today. Five of her roses remain as her legacy.

The two hero bushes, now gnarly and 50 years old, are the variety 'Fragrant Cloud', an award-winning German-bred shrub, which was the world's best-selling rose in the 1960s. The pair continue to delight.

Left *Fairview*'s entrance hall, with Clarke's leadlight windows

Right The 'Fragrant Cloud' Hybrid Tea rose has a heady perfume and dark olive-green leaves, which are tinted red when young

images
Thomas Murrell

Fairview front
verandah, with
'Fragrant Chloud',
'Mr Lincoln'
and 'William
Shakespeare'
roses, image
Thomas Murrell



Christine Cresswell,
*William Shakespeare
Rose*, 2021,
watercolour
on paper, 21 x
15.5 cm, from
The Fairview
Private Art
Collection.
Cresswell is
a botanical
artist and keen
gardener from
Margaret River
in Western
Australia.



The third is a hard-to-find 'Scarlet Queen Elizabeth' is a hot-coloured orange-red flowering shrub released in 1963 that sits well behind the white picket fence. It is paired with another regal beauty from the 1970s: 'Princess Margaret', named after Her Majesty's younger sister — a rose which outshines the 'Scarlet Queen Elizabeth' in so many ways, with its larger, more classic-shaped pink petals set off against green leathery leaves. The fifth is 'Eiffel Tower', an extraordinary rose with upright, urn-shaped buds that are a cool medium pink and very fragrant. The rose won gold medals in Geneva and Rome after being released in 1963.

Opposite
A 4 m-high 'Pierre
de Ronsard' climber
on the western wall
of Fairview makes
an eye-catching
October statement
with its pink
flowers and fragrant
perfume, image
Thomas Murrell

When Thomas Murrell moved into *Fairview* in 2007, he worked with a garden designer, Craige Matthews of Acanthus Green Design, to expand the rose collection, adding the classic, red, fragrant 'Mr Lincoln', David Austin's 'William Shakespeare' and

'Thomas à Becket', as well as more red rose classics: 'Sir Donald Bradman', 'Summer Fragrance', 'Papa Meilland', 'Kardinal' and 'Black Caviar'. These beds are underplanted with blue bearded iris to mirror the design in the leadlight front entry windows. The rose gardens are currently framed on one side by a Japanese box hedge, offering a modern formality, and tough, sweet viburnum on the other.

Art

Murrell has recently opened his home for people to view his Fairview art collection, which focuses on South Australian and West Australian women artists, including works by Marie Tuck and Jessamine Buxton. The collection also has a large holding of rose images created by established artists May Courtney O'Neill, Tasmanian botanical watercolourist June Rose Calvert, psychologist painter Dr Joan Janet Bayliss, botanical artist Christine Cresswell and emerging creatives Deborah Zibah and Jules Hancock.

'Art, roses and heritage have always been a heady mix and a passion for the owners of Perth's historic homestead, *Fairview* in Subiaco,' says Murrell. All four owners have been worthy custodians of such a beautifully preserved home set in a very special garden.

Andrea Whitely is a Perth-based garden consultant and writer. She was the WA chairman and co-ordinator of Australia's Open Garden Scheme and has served on the committee of the WA branch of the Australian Garden History Society. She is a regional director of [GardenComm International](http://GardenCommInternational.com).





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Francesca Beddie

Putting hawthorn hedges to work Introducing a modern hedgelayer

James Boxhall,
Southern Highlands,
image Francesca
Beddie

James Boxhall, the only Australian accredited by the National Hedgelaying Society in the United Kingdom, arrived at my place in Bundanoon for a cup of coffee and a preliminary chat about his craft. He suggested we talk for about 20 minutes then go for a drive to see the hawthorn hedges in the early autumn, still with their leaves, and before the winter when the laying work takes place. Two hours later, we got up from the table. A further two hours later I said goodbye to this accomplished advocate for a technique known at least since Roman times.

James comes from Tasmania. He now travels back and forth from there to Kangaroo Valley in NSW, where his wife and children live. Wherever he is, James spends his time furthering the cause of hedgelaying, dry stone walls, shingled rooves and creating built landscapes in tune with the

environment. His clients tend to be those interested in preserving the history of their gardens and farmlands. Some do it for aesthetic purposes but there are also farmers who see the benefits of a hedgerow over a wire or post and rail fence. That they do is in no small part thanks to James, who sings the praises of a working hedge. Kept in good condition it remains stock proof and provides many benefits those other fences can't: shade, shelter, wind mitigation, lower evaporation, biodiversity habitat. The hawthorn trees that create the hedges may be exotic species¹ but that doesn't deter native fauna from using them. James rattles them off: snakes, spiders, frogs, birds, bees and beetles.

'Let up to be layed'

Laying a hawthorn hedge is labour intensive, so the costs need to be amortised over long periods — a well-maintained hedge only needs restoration once every 30 to 40 years. This is a patient person's craft.

¹ *Crataegus monogyna* has been declared a weed in the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia

James explained that the usual way to propagate hawthorns for hedging is from seed. That's how he started out, by cultivating hawthorn plants as a teenager. Those seedlings need to grow to 4 m to 5 m before they are l-a-y-e-d. James spells out the various terms associated with his craft, knowing the words and their usage are unfamiliar to most. Regrowth is a vital part of the process, for it's the new branches that become the next generation of laying. The hedge can be trimmed, first on top until the stems get too weak, and then on the sides. When it comes time to lay the hedge or to rejuvenate it so that it remains a working fence,

keeping animals in or out, the p-l-e-a-c-h-i-n-g begins. This technique requires intuition, a sense of the direction and strength of fibres in the tree trunk. To pleach is to cut into the back of the base of the branch to allow it (the pleacher) to be bent over, while still attached, then supported by stakes. This process is repeated every 20 cm to make a dense barrier just over a metre high. In spring the stems come into life. It is from these layed branches that the next generation of hawthorn rises.

James thinks his skill with pleaching was inherited from his grandfather, who was admired for his use of the adze when he was employed to build wooden



Hawthorn hedge in flower; image Ian Carroll



Hawthorn hedgerows in the Southern Highlands of NSW: in front trimmed, behind let to grow and ready to be layed in the winter; image Francesca Beddie



bridges for the foresters in northern Tasmania. And while James's father was a truck driver he was also a whizz at splitting wood. 'It's in your blood,' James said. And hedgerows were still to be seen in the district, even if many (including on the family farm) had, along with dry stone walls, been bulldozed to provide access for big machinery.

Living barriers

Phalanxes of soldiers, tanks, broadacre harvesters: none like hedgerows. Julius Caesar encountered them in 55 BC as he marched north through what is now France:

[They] cut into slender trees and bent them over so that many branches came out along the length. They finished this off by inserting brambles and briars, so that these hedges formed a defence-like wall which could not only not be penetrated, but not even seen through.

This same feature caused the Allies problems during the fight for Normandy in Second World War. Soldiers could not see beyond the next hedgerow. During battles, tanks could not climb the embankments of the hedgerows without facing German anti-tank fire. To overcome the problem, Sherman tanks were fitted with iron beams, rather like iron teeth, so that they could plough through the mass of earth and vegetation. This was known as a 'Rhino' conversion.

In New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania hedgerows were used as agricultural fences until the 1960s, having first been introduced in the 1830s, emulating the English approach to enclosure farming. Wire fencing from the late 19th century and the encouragement of grain farming, especially after the Second World War, saw thousands of kilometres of hedgerows bulldozed not only in Australia but elsewhere. James told me that in the UK before this destruction they had enough hedging to go to the moon and back. Nevertheless, the tradition did continue, particularly in the western part of England where sheep and cattle farmers saw the benefits of hedges to protect their stock and in Tasmania because some could not afford wire fencing and big machinery or because they had come from the UK with their hedgelaying skills intact.

Love 'em or hate 'em

James sings the environmental benefits of hedges to farmers, which can also translate into financial ones — a contented animal is more productive — but he's given up trying to bring around those who are opposed. Just like the feel for wood is in his

veins, James thinks attitudes about hawthorn have passed through the generations. For centuries, the sight of an overgrown or flowering hedge was a reminder of those no longer tending the fields because they had been wiped out by plague or had gone to war or had not returned.

James has delved into much of the history of the hawthorn plant. He told me the flower of the common hawthorn, *Crataegus monogyna* 'Biflora', also carries legends, good or bad, depending on religious affiliation. Take the plant at Glastonbury Abbey, considered as the earliest Christian church in England. It was dissolved in the 16th century when Henry VIII created the Church of England. That the Glastonbury Thorn continued to flower at Christmas prompted Catholics to hope their religion might still flourish. Later, during the English Civil War, the Thorn was chopped down by a zealous Parliamentary soldier, who saw it as a symbol of superstition. The plant stock has survived this and other attacks. A sprig of the winter blossom is traditionally cut from the Thorn in St John's churchyard and sent to the reigning monarch, maintaining an old tradition initiated by James Montague, Bishop of Bath and Wells, when he presented a branch to the Catholic Queen Anne of Denmark, consort of James I.

Reviving the craft

Today, it is those who value heritage who make up many of James' clients. One, John Hawkins, an owner of historic gardens first in the NSW Southern Highlands and now in Tasmania, introduced James to a professional hedgelayer, Karl Liebscher, whom Mr Hawkins had brought out from Shropshire in England to work on his hedgerows. James continued his study of the craft in the UK and is working with others, like Ian Carroll at Oldbury Farm, who now meticulously tends his hawthorn hedges, having also studied with Liebscher, and even creates sculptures based on the geometry of laying.

Only in his 30s did James decide to get his Certificate III in Horticulture, which reinforced his knowledge and instilled in him his teacher's mantra, 'Simple things done well'. As well as practising this and other traditional skills such as dry stone walling, James consults and spreads the word at Lost Trades fairs, in interviews and demonstrations. It's quite something to meet a person who has been able so successfully to translate his enthusiasm for an ancient art into a modern going concern.



A Midway through the laying of a newly planted hedge

B The same hedge, laying completed: now both decorative and functional

C Hedgelaying is hard work

D As well as the modern chainsaw, the hedge layer employs a billhook, of which there are hundreds of regional variations hailing back to the Iron Age

images Ian Carroll

Francesca Beddie is the editor of *Australian Garden History*. She writes mainly policy history but has a special interest in *fin-de-siècle* Russia, and now garden history. She is a member of the Professional Historians Association.





Colleen Morris and Beverly Allen

THE FLORILEGIUM SOCIETY AT THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN SYDNEY

Botanic Endeavour

The Florilegium Society celebrates the Banks and Solander collection

Woolisia pungens
by Julie Holcombe

Images are courtesy
of the Royal Botanic
Gardens and
Domain Trust

Between 28 April and 5 May 1770 British naturalist Joseph Banks, Swedish botanist Dr Daniel Solander, Finnish assistant naturalist Herman Spöring and Scottish artist Sydney Parkinson explored and botanised around Kamay, Botany Bay (Gweagal country of the Dharawal to the south of the Bay, and Gadigal country of the Eora people to the north). It is prescient that the specimens they found here and further north on the east coast of Australia were pressed with extraordinary care in the uncut pages (quires) of

Paradise Lost. This collection of ‘curious plants’ yielded 132 species new to science at Botany Bay alone. Many of these are now grown in the gardens administered by the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust.

Those pressed specimens, 833 of which eventually found their way to the National Herbarium of New South Wales, are the inspiration for an exhibition presented by the Florilegium Society at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney.

Botanic Endeavour, which opens in August, comprises 48 recent botanical paintings donated to the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust by artists from around the world. The plants portrayed link the historic Banks and Solander specimens held in the National Herbarium of NSW with the Living Collection of the three botanic gardens (Sydney, Mount Annan and Mount Tomah) and mark the 250th anniversary in 2020 of Captain Cook's voyage in the *Endeavour*. The focus is on these historic specimens, drawing attention to the time and place of their collection, their history and inviting reflection on what their significance is to science, to the Aboriginal peoples, to those collecting them and to the Royal Botanic Gardens now.

As only a few of the Florilegium Society artists live in the Sydney area, fresh plant material had to be sourced with considerable ingenuity. This involved the co-operation of the botanic gardens in Cambridge, Oxford and Kew in the United Kingdom as well as Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide and Darwin, various specialist nurseries as well as from the three gardens of the Domain Trust. One artist sourced seeds from Kings Park in Western Australia and grew them in Cambridge; another painted from plants on the Amahlongwana River

in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In Australia, material obtained from specialist nurseries was grown on at home.

In this collection the plants are painted from life. The artists' approaches are varied, reflecting their diverse backgrounds and interests – some show the plant in its entirety, some focus on just one aspect, while others combine an aesthetic objective with the scientific and include habit and fine morphological detail.

To paint from life is the ideal for botanical painters and illustrators – the transience of plants is both an inspiration and a challenge, and although this project provided a few obstacles for some of the artists, they were nothing of the order of those faced by the young Sydney Parkinson (1745–1771). Transience presented a very different challenge to him and other artists who began this voyage with him: none survived the voyage back to England.

Before the *Endeavour* reached Australia's east coast, Banks and Solander had made extensive collections in New Zealand and Parkinson's workload was enormous. He could no longer complete paintings but instead made accurate drawings with some critical parts in coloured detail and further colour notes on the reverse.

Left *Isopogon anemonifolius*
by Mary Ann Mein

Right *Hakea gibbosa*
by Linda Catchlove





Top *Banksia ericifolia*, by Margaret Pieroni

Bottom *Telmatoblechnum indicum*, by Halina Steele

To produce finely detailed drawings in the great cabin of a heaving ship, working alongside Banks and Solander, surrounded by specimens (not only plants but fauna as well), and often working into the night by lamp and candlelight, was an extraordinary achievement.

Australian-born Lucy T. Smith is a botanical artist at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. In 2001 Lucy sailed from Queensland to Indonesia in the replica of the *Endeavour* for the BBC documentary 'The Ship'. Lucy lived for six weeks in the conditions experienced by Sydney Parkinson. During the voyage Lucy kept a diary and sketchbook and produced drawings of plants in the manner of Sydney Parkinson. Several of Lucy's drawings are included in the exhibition. These reinforce the enduring impact of Parkinson's short but productive life.

The legacy of Parkinson's contribution and his precision was highlighted when Banks's *Florilegium* was finally published in full 200 years later. Banks had planned a publication with 743 plates based on Parkinson's finished drawings or sketches and had employed five painters and 18 engravers to prepare copper plates of an unequalled quality. It seemed he came tantalisingly close to publication: 'it can be completed in just a few months' he wrote in 1784, two years after Solander's untimely death. However, only a limited number of plates were printed in Banks's lifetime.

In addition to the paintings, some of the newly digitised Banks and Solander collection images will be displayed in the exhibition along with more treasures from the Daniel Solander Library, including some of the Banks's *Florilegium* plates, a specimen cabinet that belonged to Banks, maps and Sydney Parkinson's *Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas*.

In 2020, the Florilegium Society published, with support from the AGHS Sydney and Northern NSW branches, *Botanic Endeavour* in a limited edition of 600 copies. The book includes essays on the Banks and Solander specimens and the Library collections and features full colour plates of 45 paintings, accompanied by a fine detail image of the Banks specimen. Each species has its botanical names and the Aboriginal names when known, a description and some have quotes from Banks, Sydney Parkinson or Daniel Solander. Since the publication of the book, the Society has been delighted that an additional three artists have each painted a work for the exhibition.

The free exhibition will be on show from **21 August to 12 September**, 10am to 4pm, at the Lion Gate Lodge in the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney and the book will be available for purchase.

One of the guided walks offered on the Thursday (9 September) before the AGHS's 2021 conference in Sydney will focus on the plants in the Botanic Endeavour exhibition.

For the bookshelf

**Ramin Ganeshram, *Saffron: A Global History*
Reaktion Books, 2021**

Saffron: A Global History is a new addition to the now extensive list of what can be described as ‘single substance’ studies in the Reaktion Books, ‘Edible History’ series. Although diminutive in size — A5, 150 pages, many of them with images or illustrations — this book by New York-based chef and culinary historian, Ramin Ganeshram, captures much of the reverence and mystique associated with saffron, the delicate stigmas plucked from the flowers of *Crocus sativus*, from antiquity to the present. It also provides practical information about growing, processing, purchasing and cooking with saffron, reputedly the world’s most expensive spice.

The author’s intensely personal connection with the ‘undisputed queen of spices’ as ‘the source of an elixir that could transport one to deeply rooted ancestral histories’ is quickly revealed through his Iranian heritage on his mother’s side. Ganeshram largely delivers on his promise of ‘a comprehensive view of the history of saffron’ by exploring its many uses. These are not just culinary; saffron is also used for dyeing textiles, in perfumes and cosmetics, has medicinal and health-giving benefits, and has played its role in art and religion, economics and trade.

Ganeshram crafts a compelling tale of saffron’s ‘circuitous route’ over the centuries, from its humble wild origins in ancient Greece to exotic cultivar and precious trade commodity, shaping tastes and traditional dishes in various ways as it was acculturated into cuisines across the globe. The geographical transference of saffron is fascinating, its spread mapping the rise and fall of conquerors and empires that took the spice from Europe to the Orient, to England and the New World and eventually, the Antipodes. I was previously unaware of the influence in America of the ‘Yellow Dutch’ from northern Europe, who settled in Pennsylvania where they cultivated saffron in the early 18th century.

The book provides useful information about choosing between different grades and quality, including how to distinguish true saffron from imitations, about production sources, processing and when to use whole, steeped, toasted or powdered versions. It also includes 16 recipes, from Greek Kozai chicken and risotto Milanese to Persian ice-cream, Swedish buns and Amish

Pennsylvania Dutch Crumb Cake. One small gripe is the recipes’ arrangement, with seemingly no logical order, neither alphabetical nor organised according to type of dish.

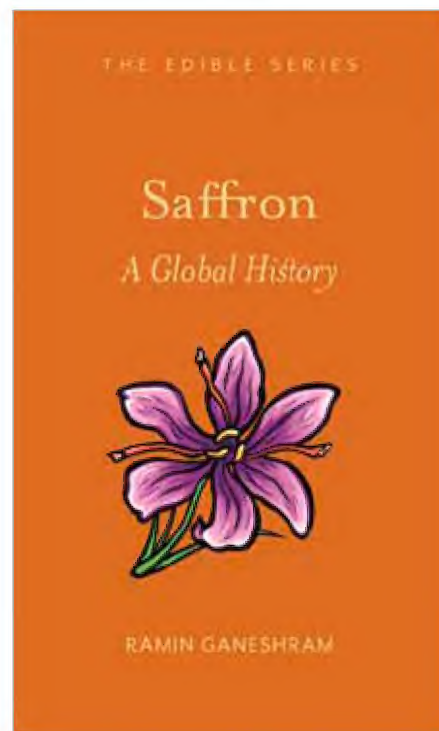
The intricacies of saffron growing, harvesting and processing explain its limited production areas and costly price. In a good season, 150,000 hand-picked flowers produce a kilogram of saffron stigmas — three per flower, which must each be removed by hand.

The final chapters turn to contemporary markets and farming, with a short section on DIY cultivation with seasonal instructions (written with the northern hemisphere in mind); and on importation of corms from listed suppliers (which would have to be approved by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service).

The predominance of recommended retailers in the United States and United Kingdom demonstrates the anticipated readership. Although international mail-order services are offered, there is no mention of established Australian suppliers such as The Saffron Store and Herbie’s Spices, who sell premium Iranian and Kashmiri varieties online. Similarly, New Zealand is noted for its domestic production, but there is no acknowledgment of Australian growers. Saffron has been

grown commercially in Tasmania since the 1990s by Tasmanian Saffron (Tas-Saff) in the Huon Valley, and new producers have recently entered the market, such as Eladnelle Farm in the Upper Derwent region in Tasmania and Argyle Australian Saffron in Orange, New South Wales. All produce premium grade saffron, which they sell direct to the public at local markets and/or online. Locally grown saffron is also being used in value-added products such as saffron tea, vodka and gin.

Dr Jacqueline Newling is an historian and gastronomer.

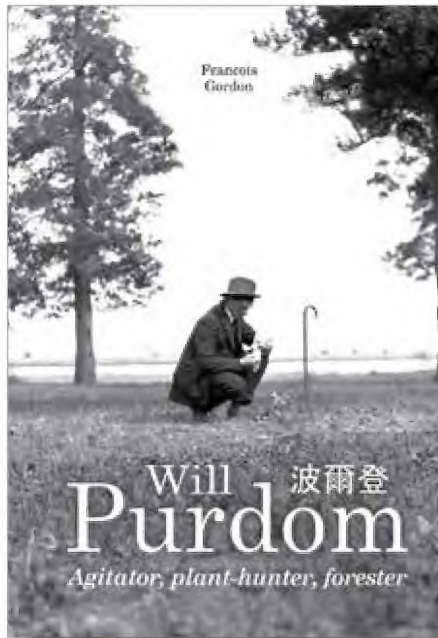


For the bookshelf

Francois Gordon, *Will Purdom*
Agitator, plant-hunter, forester

Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, 2020

The sub-title of this biography is arresting in itself and alerts potential readers to the surprising beginnings of the career of Will Purdom but the string of Chinese characters alongside adds a stronger note of piquancy that is intriguing, and unexplained until the reader is well into the book.



Other authors have focussed on Purdom's plant introductions (for example, viburnum, primulas, trolius, asters, clematis). Francois Gordon, a very persistent researcher, presents a detailed observation of the man himself: his character, his personality, his attitudes and behaviour; and the ideas and habits that guided his life wherever he was.

The story is presented as three distinct but connected phases of Purdom's life.

Predictably it begins with

his childhood and formative years that eventually see him, by his own efforts and motivation, selected to undertake his training at the most prestigious institution in the United Kingdom, as a horticulture apprentice at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Kew Gardens were at the time hidebound by a rigid hierarchy and extremely authoritarian bureaucracy, although they were facing challenges from mounting expectations of social change and the rise of industrial unionism. Purdom, raised with strong non-Conformist beliefs, took it on himself to establish a union among the apprentices at Kew. This action brought about serious conflict that soon reached the very peak of the organisation in the form of its stern and formidable director, Sir William Thistleton Dyer (from 1885 to 1905). Dyer's instructions to disband the union and his rejection of claims for wage rises resulted in a strike led by Purdom. Despite a promising start and a good performance record as a trainee, this single act of defiance was a serious threat to the young man's future.

By sheer good fortune, Thistleton Dyer was replaced by a new director, David Prain, just as Purdom's class was graduating. Prain had less authoritarian views — and well-placed international contacts — and he recommended to two of them, Charles Sprague Sergeant (Arnold Arboretum, United States) and Harry Veitch (Veitch Nursery), that Purdom would make a good plant collector for them in China. After a degree of vexation and annoyance on the part of his two prospective employers, terms were agreed and Purdom was off to China.

So begins the second phase of the book: a new start for Purdom in the remote vastness of Western China to search for tree peonies. Times were restless in China too. The old Imperial system had fractured and was beginning to crumble under the imposts of the European powers battling each other and the Manchu Emperors for control of the country, while at the same time many bands of rebellious Chinese, outright warlords and criminals, fought each other and the others for independence or their own kingdoms. Despite the great danger of being murdered as a foreign devil or spy, or massacred in a general kill-all, Purdom managed to survive by posing as a native and speaking the lingo. He got the tree peonies too.

As the civil strife got ever worse, Purdom began to understand that change was coming to the Land of the Dragon Throne and that whatever came after would most likely be modernising, industrialising and exploitative of all kinds of resources. In the third phase of his life, having become close to the inner circles of the Chinese government, he turned his attention to forestry of the native trees and reafforestation. He stayed on in China, where he developed hundreds of nurseries, and died there as a result of a post-operative infection in 1921, aged 41.

The inclusion of Chinese material from the archives of the Chinese government marks the first significant information of this kind being included in a plant hunting book. A jolly good tale that is very highly recommended.

Trevor Nottle has been a member of the South Australian branch of AGHS since it began. He is a well-known writer on a wide range of horticultural subjects, including garden history.

Yarrabin the former home of Australian garden history pioneers Tim and Keva North

Yarrabin is a beautiful 1951 house in a woodland garden at 32 Kangaloon Road, Bowral, New South Wales. It adjoins the Aaron Bolot-designed 1949 Moderne style *Beatrice Park* at 90 Bendooley Street. Both are on large town sites and share a gardening history. They were multiple Open Bowral Town Garden winners from the late 1950s. 2020 marked the 60th anniversary of both gardens winning first place in their categories in the 1960 Festival of Flowers.

In July 2020 neighbours were told that *Yarrabin* had been sold and was to be developed for medium-density housing, which would not be able to retain the house and garden. *Beatrice Park* is within a heritage conservation area but *Yarrabin* was not. The adjoining residents, supported by Wingecarribee Shire's Heritage Advisory Committee, sought an Interim Heritage Order on *Yarrabin*. The Heritage Officer's assessment included these words:

The property is bounded on the western side by a prominent line of Bhutan cypress trees (*Cupressus torulosa*) and on the east by a stand of Arizona cypress (*Cupressus arizonica*), which are visible from both Kangaloon Road and Bendooley Street and are a characteristic planting.

The garden contains a number of significant trees, the most important of which is the horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*). This tree is significant for its age and comparative rarity for a tree of this maturity. This tree is mentioned in Tim North's, *Garden Cuttings: Reflections from and Australian Gardener* (1999, New Holland Publishers: Sydney). Individual significant trees are the beech and the two Kanzan cherries at the top of the stairs. Also present may be a *Tilia*.



Open Garden Day
circa 1960, *Beatrice Park* on left and
Yarrabin on the right,
image from Keva
North Collection



Left Keva and Tim North at Yarrabin in the 1980s, image Keva North Collection



Right Yarrabin, image Bud Townsing, 2020

Trees significant as a group are the row of *Cupressus torulosa* on the western boundary and the collection as a whole of mature trees throughout the garden.

The garden is significant locally as an example of a prominent garden open to the public under the Open Gardens scheme from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. It was featured on the cover of *The Australian Women's Weekly* on 1 November 1961 and featured prominently in descriptions and photographs in Tim North's book *Garden Cuttings*. The whole garden has strong landscape significance as a characteristic post-war 'Bowral' house surrounded by a large garden. The maturity of the garden and the height of many of the trees give it landmark significance in the immediate area. Yarrabin was one of the featured open gardens for Bowral's inaugural Festival of Flowers in 1958 (which became the annual Tulip Time Festival for which Bowral is famed). Yarrabin won awards for its garden between 1958 and 1962 when it was opened by the then owners, Roy and Gwen Green.

Socially the garden is significant as a pre-eminent show garden over a period of many years, including the years under the stewardship of the Greens and the Norths. The large gatherings and tours to the garden organised by the Norths contribute to the social significance, particularly with their association with the Australian Garden History Society.

Wingecarribee Shire promptly applied an Interim Conservation Order to the site and thankfully Yarrabin has now been purchased by the owners of adjoining *Beatrice Park*, Justin Hutchinson and John Bowers, who have undertaken major conservation work to the house and garden.

Both gardens will be open for the first time together in 60 years on 25 and 26 September and then 2 to 4 October 2021.

While the council is to be applauded for its actions on Yarrabin, the threat to other heritage sites in the Shire remains. This is because the Local Environmental Plan allows for medium-density seniors housing in all its residential zones, including heritage conservation areas. The Council has some discretion, although all refusals are appealable to the Land and Environment Court, where many decisions can go in favour of the applicant. This plan is based on a State planning policy and applies across NSW, except in Greater Sydney where there is a current moratorium on development in conservation areas. State policy allows for aged-care facilities, health-service facilities, boarding houses and child-care facilities in all residential areas, including conservation areas.

The Norths

The importance of Yarrabin for the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS), apart from its intrinsic value as a heritage site, is that it was the home of Tim and Keva North from 1983 to 1994. Tim was a horticultural journalist, who wrote for several publications



including *Australian House and Garden* and *Your Garden*. Working from their Sydney home in October 1981, Tim and Keva produced a small eight-page magazine called *Garden Cuttings* for what Tim called 'discerning' gardeners.

By 1983 the magazine had grown and the name changed from *Garden Cuttings* to *The Australian Garden Journal*. Tim was Secretary of the then three-year-old AGHS, when the committee decided that *The Australian Garden Journal* was a befitting magazine to promote garden history. They reached an agreement that the *Journal* was to incorporate two pages of AGHS news in each issue, which would benefit the journal as well as the Society. Tim remained secretary of AGHS until 1988.

In December 1983 the Norths moved from Sydney to *Yarrabin*. In his 1999 book, also called *Garden Cuttings*, Tim North devoted many pages to *Yarrabin* and included 10 pages of colour photos, mainly of the garden. He says that in 1983 they were looking for a romantic cottage but instead found a run-down Art Deco house, unkempt and unloved for 20 years, set in two acres (0.8 hectares) of what had once been a prize-winning garden. The Norths added a vaulted ceiling room to the north of the house, which was designed by architect Howard Tanner, who is reported as saying to Tim and Keva, 'If you are going to alter a house you may as well do it properly'.

In 1988, with two horticultural students, Jane Cavanough and Anthea Prell, Tim North produced a 95-page book on the *Gardens of the Southern*

Highlands 1828–1988, which remains an important reference book to the gardens of this area.

In 1989, AGHS decided to publish its own magazine named *Australian Garden History*. From Volume 8 No 4 April/May 1989, *The Australian Garden Journal* was no longer the official AGHS journal. In December 1994 Tim and Keva moved to Canberra. The last issue of *The Australian Garden Journal*, Volume 13 No 4 was published in autumn 1996.

Born in London in 1921, David Arthur Guy North, but always known as Tim, died in Canberra in June 2011. Keva still lives in Canberra and has very kindly provided information and suggestions for this article and for a new, fully illustrated book on *Yarrabin*. She recalls many of the visitors to the house and garden, including well-known gardeners and garden writers from overseas and Australia. Among them were Rosemary Verey of Barnsley House in England; John Sales, Chief Garden Adviser to the National Trust of England and Wales; and Australians such as landscape architect John Patrick, botanist Dr Peter Valder and garden writers Trevor Nottle and Shirley Stackhouse.

Trevor Nottle's tribute to Tim North was published in *Australian Garden History*, 23 (2), October/November/December 2011.

Ponds on the eastern side of *Yarrabin* under heavy snow, image taken from a slide by Keva North. Keva became a passionate photographer when she moved to the Southern Highlands in 1983

Garden Cuttings Revisited – A brief history of Yarrabin and the gardening world of Tim and Keva North by Bud Townsing, Keva North and Dennis McManus.

Available from Bud Townsing
metow@bigpond.com
and mobile 0429 030 195.

Dennis McManus PSM is a retired Senior Heritage Officer from the NSW Heritage Office (1981–2006), a community representative on Wingecarribee Shire's Heritage Advisory Committee and a member of AGHS.

Profile

JOHN VISKA – chairman of AGHS's West Australian branch



John Viska introduces the exhibition, *Historic Gardens of Perth: Western Suburbs*, October 2018.
image Patsy Vizents

A visit to John Viska's North Perth house is a treat for the senses. Not only is the house full of delightful antique glass and ceramic ware, this true plantsman's garden also abounds with pot plants, shrubs, trees and climbers. Each has a story for John to tell. Cuttings and rare gifts have evolved through sharing his love of gardening and botany; many times a visit to the garden will result in an arm-full of cuttings destined for another's garden.

John was instrumental in establishing the West Australian (WA) branch. After being encouraged by Oline Richards in 1988 to contact several like-minded people to form the branch, he was elected Chairman and has undertaken that role four times since then. The branch celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2018 with many of the original committee present, a testament to the strength of commitment to the original and continuing values of the Society.

In 2021 John was awarded life membership of the Society for his contribution to the formation of the WA branch, continual service and involvement in the committee over 30 years. The award honours his dedication to advocacy and the celebration of historic gardens and horticulture and his enormous capacity to share information, including his various collections of books and garden-related objects. John has been the 'go-to' man in history and horticulture circles in Western Australia for decades, meaning his talks, presented every year on various topics,

have enabled him to promote the work of AGHS in all its forms, including when guiding amateur and professional groups as part of the WA branch activities and conferences. As a returning 'sand proper' in 2004 from Victoria, I was pleased to attend a walking tour of Kings Park with John leading the group confidently through the wild section of the public park while sharing his expertise in the most entertaining way. It was a real treat to be re-introduced to plants, once so familiar to me.

Projects and events hosted by the branch often have John's direct involvement. Nowhere is that better displayed than with conferences. Branch membership has never exceeded 100 but we have still managed to organise three very successful conferences (1998, 2005 and 2014). John was chairman for each of them.

John's energy is palpable when he gets his teeth into projects such as conference organising or, as in 2020, producing *Historic Gardens of Perth: European Settlement to Modernism*, a book based on two exhibitions developed by the WA branch in 2011 and 2018 with the help of members skilled in garden history research. John has led the editorial committee and worked with the book designer to translate the content from these two exhibitions into the first book of its kind in Western Australia.

Receiving the WA Individual Heritage Award for his role in garden history from the State Heritage Office in 2008 was acknowledgement of John's contribution to the wider community, both through his enthusiasm for his subject and the manner in which he shares his knowledge at all levels be it with students, AGHS members or the general public. His work, entirely undertaken in a voluntary capacity, truly reflects the AGHS mission statement:

The Australian Garden History Society promotes awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes through engagement, research, advocacy and activities.

Patsy Vizents is the WA branch's representative on the National Management Committee and coordinator of the AGHS's National Oral History Collection.



Warwick Mayne-Wilson – an appreciation

Stuart Read and Colleen Morris

Conservation landscape architect Warwick Mayne-Wilson died on Anzac Day, aged 84.

A major contributor to the field of heritage landscapes for almost three decades, this was Warwick's second career. Born and raised in Perth, he loved plants and gardening as a child. He studied modern history and political philosophy before entering Australia's diplomatic corps, serving at six overseas missions over 27 years, marrying and having two daughters.

Warwick retrained in his 50s in landscape architecture at the University of New South Wales (graduating in 1989), then doing a Masters in Heritage Conservation at Sydney University. His 1993 thesis was on identifying, assessing and conserving heritage landscapes.

A student placement became the basis for the Heritage Council of NSW publication, *Heritage Curtilages* (1992), which remains the chief guideline on this touchy subject.

In the early 1990s Warwick chaired the Parks and Gardens Conservation Committee of the National Trust of Australia (NSW). This committee tackled landscape, an under-studied type of heritage, added to the Trust's register of places, and held seminars.

At the same time, Warwick had set up a consultancy and took on a work-experience student, Ari Anderson, who remained for more than two decades. Mayne-Wilson & Associates (MWA) specialised in landscapes – preparing heritage studies, landscape assessments, conservation and management plans. Several of their projects won awards from the National Trust (NSW) and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA). Warwick was cautious and detailed in his assessments, combining great perception and research with a passion for his topics. Warwick's reports on the Illawarra Escarpment (landscape character and management) and dry stone walls of the Kiama district remain significant reference studies. A study of Warringah Ocean Pools was among the first detailed assessments of this now-valued feature of our coast.

He also wrote articles for *Landscape Australia* (AILA), *Historic Environment* (Australia ICOMOS – a professional cultural heritage network), the National Trust (NSW) magazine and *Australian Garden History*. His abiding interest in public landscapes resulted in a self-published 2013 book *Town Parks of NSW: their past, present and future*, the seminal work on this topic. It gives a detailed history of the creation and rapid expansion of 'a park for every town' (or suburb) and subsequent pressures on these areas. The book also contains surveys of a selection of parks across the state.

Warwick's serious interest in the 'public good' and the 'common good', is something that is becoming, regrettably, increasingly rare. He taught post-graduate students at the Universities of NSW and Sydney and was a good mentor – always guiding with a light touch. In later years, he organised talks for the University of the Third Age.

A gentleman, widely read, insightful and clear-minded, Warwick loved music, had a sense of the absurd and a wicked sense of humour.



Articles by Warwick Mayne-Wilson published in *Australian Garden History* include:

- Juniper Hall', 4(3), 11-13
- 'Garden styles', 10(1), 9-14
- 'Viewpoint - Gardening under threat', 16(4), 3-6
- 'A charter for tree management', 17(2), 19-21

Digital copies of the journal from Volume 11 (1) July 1999 are available on the AGHS website.

Earlier digitised issues are available from [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#). AGHS members can download, **for free**, all journal issues available on the AGHS website. Use your login details.

Non-AGHS members can buy digital copies of issues published in the past two years. They can download, **for free**, earlier issues. Hard copies are also available to purchase on the website.

Inside view

While our international counterparts continue to grapple with COVID-19, it's a privilege to attend events together in person again, smell the roses rather than see them on Zoom and together react spontaneously to a view behind a hedge. We are excited that the hard-working Sydney conference committee's plans will be realised in a few months and encourage all those who have missed out or can't attend, to become 'virtual' delegates and participate from wherever you are.

We have attended and heard about several inspiring events in the past few weeks. I (Stuart) attended the opening of the Guriwal Arts and Culture [Trail](#), a signage and artwork project that is beefing up bush regeneration in Sydney's Centennial Park done by volunteers since 1998. Now you can learn Aboriginal names for, uses of, and attachment to plants along this trail. It was a wonderful chance to re-learn plants I thought I knew and appreciate this place from another perspective.

Likewise a seminar in the Mulgoa Valley south of Penrith, in Dharug Country, explored the collaborative research rediscovering and re-learning lost Dharug names for places. It also considered colonial architecture and picturesque landscape design, practised by settlers such as the Cox family, whose aspirations, some too grandiose, were dashed by 1840s financial bankruptcy.

Both were terrific days exploring issues of public access to other histories, public understanding of what 'colony', 'displacement' and 'survival' means, public thirst for heritage conservation and desire for access to parklands, open space, recreation.

The Friends of Fernhill and the Mulgoa Valley, who just won the National Trust (NSW) Heritage Award for Advocacy for their campaign to better manage these public assets, requested AGHS add the

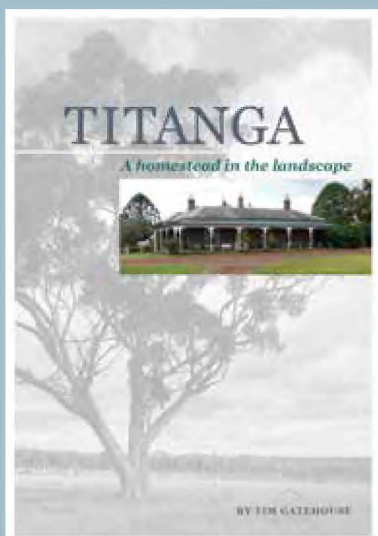
Mulgoa Valley to our list of [Landscapes at Risk](#). It's pleasing other groups look to us for leadership and as giving their causes 'weight'.

The ACT Monaro Riverina Branch met in Gundaroo, on Ngunnawal Country, to hold a second-hand book sale to raise funds for digitisation projects and indulge in virtual international escape, watching the movie *The Gardener* about the creation of Frank Cabot's magnificent private pleasure garden, *Les Quatre Vents* in Canada. I (Bronwyn) have always considered it a privilege to be welcomed into someone's garden. Generally, they are deeply personal places and like any piece of art, reveal something about their creator. Cabot, having visited Ruth Bancroft's dry garden in Walnut Creek, California, recognised there was an opportunity to create an organisation to help preserve such gardens for future generations and founded the [Garden Conservancy](#). Their mission is to preserve, share, and celebrate America's gardens and gardening traditions to educate and inspire the public. It is reassuring to be reminded of like-minded groups of volunteers throughout the world.

The Southern Highlands Branch has just had a victory following a hard-fought campaign for another of our *Landscapes at Risk*. Wingecarribee Shire Council has withdrawn their Station Street proposal to remove an avenue of pin oaks, a row of rare old *Camellia* cultivars and other significant street trees for a bypass. While there is much still to be done to ensure the management of these plantings, this is another example of the dedicated work and commitment of our members.

What a great resource our journal is, ensuring stories of significant gardens and cultural landscapes are told. Thank you to all those who have contributed to this issue.

Stuart Read and Bronwyn Blake, Co-Chairs



NOW AVAILABLE Tim Gatehouse's history of Titanga, a grazing property in the Western District of Victoria.

Titanga is significant for its contribution to the pastoral history of Victoria, and for three components of its setting in the landscape – the formal dry climate garden, the arboretum parklands and its shelter belt plantations. AGHS members can buy a hard copy for the discounted price of \$15 (normally \$25). The digital version can be downloaded from the website: <https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/product/garden-history-titanga/>

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Getting to know them

stories from the AGHS national oral history collection

You may know something about one or many of the historic gardens in Australia and recognise names of garden designers. But do you know the names of the men and women who manage these iconic gardens, the head gardeners? This unique band are project managers; conservationists; artists and designers; engineers; historians; scientists; arborists; and economic contributors to the land they work. This is an extract from an interview conducted by Lyn Barrett, AGHS South Highlands, in December 2020, with one such person, **Ian Carroll**, who has worked at Milton Park, Kennerton Green and today Oldbury Farm.

Ian, can we start at the beginning with some biographical details about yourself?

I was born and bred in Queensland. Before I became a gardener, I went through a couple of career changes. I was a [computer] programmer and worked in public service middle management where I picked up my keenness for record keeping and manual writing, which has all translated well into what I do as a head gardener.

That is the one thing I think head gardeners in England do exceptionally well. You can go back to 1800 and see when they planted a particular tree, it's an amazing record that they have.

The absence of records is a problem here... Once I did find an old notebook [at Milton Park] which had some pay rates for labourers in the 1940s. I find all that sort of thing really interesting. Records of how the gardens developed or what trees were planted, would be fantastic and that certainly is what I do now.

What motivated you to look at gardening as the change in career path?

I used to work for a few years and then cash in and travel overseas. Eventually I got sick of that. I was looking at studying forestry, but in those days, 30 years ago, the Forestry Department had a philosophy that was a bit alien to what I was wanting to do – it was more about production than conservation, which was my interest. I was pointed in the direction of horticulture... so I enrolled in the Certificate III course at Ryde School of Horticulture.

I like my gardeners to have done the Certificate III. I like them to know the botanical name, understand the science behind fertilising, the chemicals and so on... [T]hen on top of that you just add layers of experience and time. [But] we all come out of the Cert. III thinking we know everything [even though] gardening is such a humbling industry and job. Just when you think, 'Oh yeah I can do that', and 'Doesn't my garden look great' you visit someone else's garden... and you think, 'How are they doing that?' and 'Why didn't I think of doing that?' Gardening is a lifelong learning thing, and this is what you need in a good gardener, the idea that you learn something new every day.

Head Gardeners are garden managers. Their skill set must be wide ranging as they are responsible for all aspects of the garden. They need to have some level of competency in all applicable trades to brief, organise and



supervise outside contractors. They are recruiters, leaders, trainers of staff. They have to maintain good working relationships with owners. There are budgets to adhere to, records to be kept, reports written. And there is always weeding, pruning, mowing, planting.

...One of my preoccupations now is to promote gardening as a career. That requires continuing professional development. All the white-collared occupations talk about CPD and it's necessary in a lot of other trades like electricians, plumbers. [They] have to keep up with new regulations... Gardeners, we spend our careers hanging around in other people's backyards, we don't know each other generally, we don't talk to each other. There are no guilds or groups or real networks... It comes back to older gardeners mentoring younger gardeners, passing on knowledge.

Do you see continuing professional development being a state thing or a national body?

I see it as an industry thing. There is an over-arching body, the [Australian Institute of Horticulture](#), which offers training and educational programs as do botanic gardens and garden clubs. The industry needs more of this and it could make more use of the knowledge of experienced gardeners.

The AGHS plays a role in encouraging record keeping and professional development. Go to the **website** to learn more about webinars and other events being held around the country or to buy a copy of [Recording gardens](#), a practical guide to documenting a garden.

The full interview with Ian Carroll will be available on the **AGHS website**.



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